



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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TWO GO-FAST BOATS INTERDICTED AND EIGHT DEFENDANTS INDICTED

September 17, 2002, interdiction

On September 17, 2002, four (4) Colombian nationals were apprehended on board a "go-fast," speed boat in the Eastern Pacific Ocean after fleeing in an attempt to evade the United States Coast Guard and United States Navy. During the attempted flight and chase, the crew of the go-fast boat jettisoned numerous bales of cocaine overboard. Over 1,300 kilograms of cocaine was recovered.

The crew of the go-fast boat was indicted on September 19, 2002, by a Federal grand jury in Tampa and charged with two counts of maritime drug smuggling on the high seas in violation of Title 46 Appendix, United States Code, Sections 1903(a), 1903(g) and 1903(j). The defendants indicted were: (1) Elpidio Enriquez; (2) Juan Ruiz Reyes; (3) Wilfredo Cuero; and (4) Angel Moreno.

All four defendants appeared on September 26, 2002, before United States Magistrate Judge Thomas B. McCoun, III, for their initial appearances and arraignments. All defendants were ordered detained pending trial and, if convicted, they face a mandatory

minimum sentence of ten (10) years' imprisonment and a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney W. Stephen Muldrow.

September 21, 2002, interdiction

On October 1, 2002, four (4) Colombian nationals appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark A. Pizzo for their initial appearances and arraignments on two counts of maritime drug smuggling on the high seas in violation of Title 46 Appendix, United States Code, Sections 1903(a), 1903(g) and 1903(j). The defendants, who were indicted on September 26, 2002, are: (1) Felipe Cortez; (2) Jose Daniel Vallecilla; (3) Aleydo Gonzalez; and (4) Nicolas Valverde.

The defendants were on board a "go-fast," speed boat in the Eastern Pacific Ocean when they were interdicted by the United States Coast Guard and United States Navy on September 21, 2002. The crew of the go-fast boat jettisoned bales of cocaine from their boat and attempted to evade apprehension. Ultimately, the go-fast boat was stopped and approximately 627 kilograms of cocaine were recovered that had been thrown overboard by the crew.

All defendants were ordered detained pending trial and, if convicted, they face a mandatory minimum sentence of ten (10) years' imprisonment and a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Pamela Cothran.

The defendants are being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys who are part of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF). These cases are

related to an ongoing drug investigation out of Tampa, Florida, named OPERATION PANAMA EXPRESS. Participating agencies include: the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Navy, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Customs Service and the U.S. Marshals Service.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.